

*Sir Sandford Fleming*

*to the Author's respectful Compl<sup>ts</sup> & Esteem.*

# An Era of Progression

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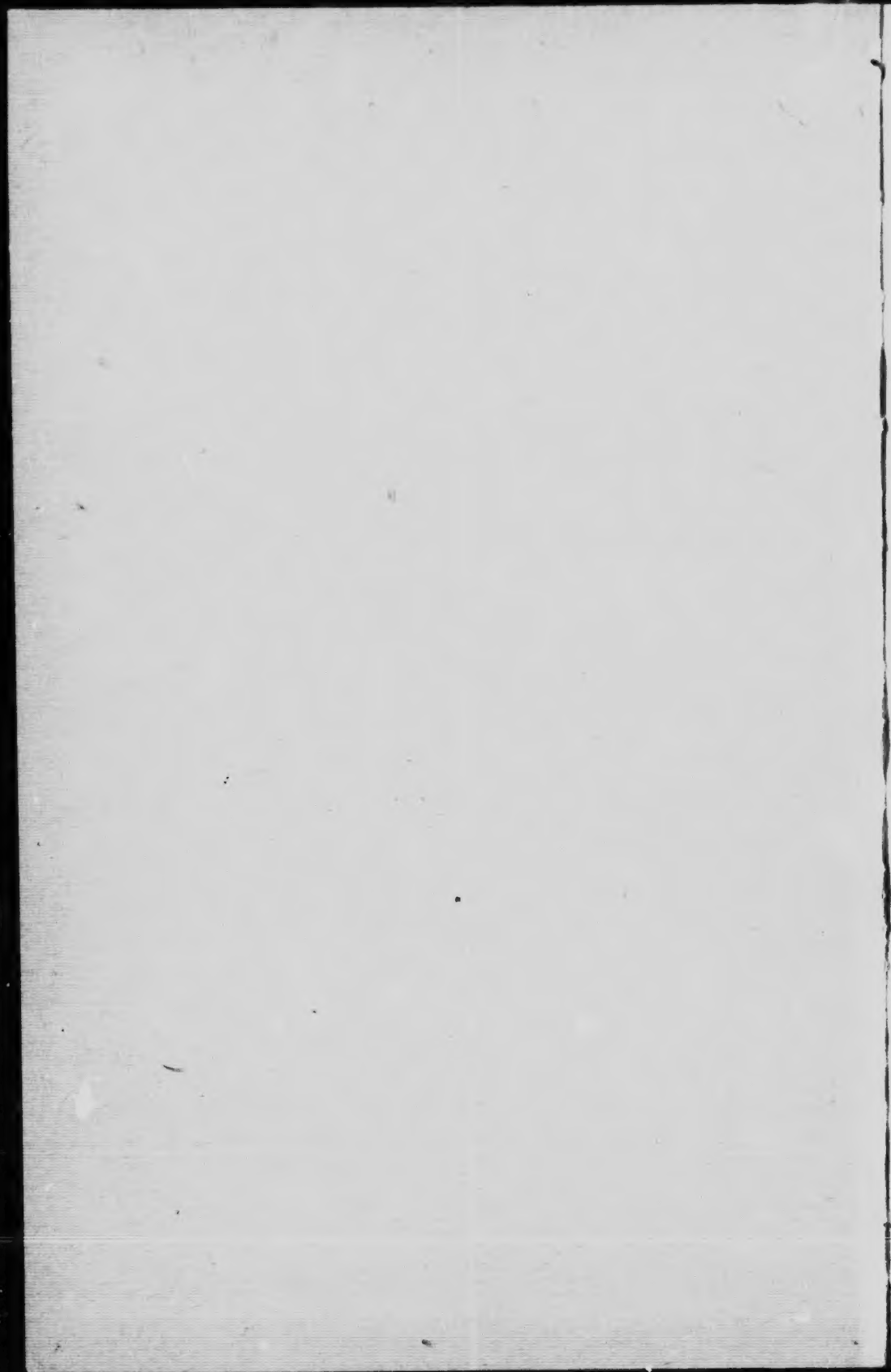
Sir Sandford Fleming

*The Draining  
of Cobalt Lake  
and Its Effect  
on the Town*

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*by* Æ. MUNRO, M.D.



# An Era of Progression

## *The DRAINING of COBALT LAKE and its EFFECT on the TOWN*

The above is a topic that concerns everyone interested in the Town of Cobalt and the magnificent industry (silver mining) that has called the Town into being.

The problem or question was formally, but in a semi-private manner, or, perhaps more correctly, in a business capacity, broached before the Town Council by Mr. M. B. R. Gordon, Manager of the Cobalt Lake Mine, who seems naturally to be the principal mover in the project. The subject was tentatively discussed at a recent meeting of the Council, and it would appear from what Mr. Gordon stated there, that it would be advantageous to the Town, as well as an expedient undertaking.

From the many interests involved, it was, therefore, deemed prudent to bring up the matter for public discussion by the members of the Board of Trade of the Town. Accordingly, this topic was the chief item to be discussed at a meeting of the Cobalt Board of Trade on the evening of June 17th, in the Council Chamber, and it drew out a large attendance of the members and others.

### SHORT HISTORY of the COBALT LAKE MINE

It may be expedient here at the outset to mention a few points in the history of the leading Mine taking up this matter.

In the early days of this Camp speculative expectations ran high in regard to finding a veritable bonanza mine of silver ore underneath the bed of Cobalt Lake. Whether this supposition was well or ill-founded is comparatively unimportant for our purpose; the fact is that it enabled the promoters of the Cobalt Lake Mine to offer, in response for tenders, the Government \$1,085,000 for the privilege of extracting the ore underneath the Lake containing a superficies of something like 51 acres, 47 acres of which belong to Cobalt Lake Mine and 4 acres to McKinley-Darragh.

As far as can be ascertained at present, there was no

stipulation made with regard to the difficulty of doing so without removal of the superincumbent water pro or contra.

In view of the expectations and large price paid to the Government, the Company was incorporated at the high capitalization of \$5,000,000, being 5,000,000 shares at a par value of \$1.00 each.

For years the Company labored under difficulties, or encountered hard work or ill luck in not finding ore of as high value as was expected, so that the public had given up all hope of obtaining any dividend on the capital they had invested, and regarded it like the Crown Reserve Mine, somewhat in the nature of a "wild cat," but, like the Crown Reserve (though not so immediate or striking) it has survived the "cold blasts" and shown itself "a chip of the old block." No doubt the path of this Mine has, in a sense, been strewn with fire and not with flowers, so to speak.

By dint of perseverance, and good management and good luck (an important factor in mining), brighter times have come. The capitalization has been reduced to \$3,000,000; the resources of the Mine revealed, so that bodies of ore are uncovered which are estimated to be worth \$2,000,000; a new company, reputedly with plenty of capital behind it, has purchased the controlling interest of the Mine, and now good hopes are entertained that with a favorable wind, the dividends, already commenced, will be continued and that it will run on similar lines to the Crown Reserve.

In consequence of the indomitable perseverance and skill of Mr. Gordon, the present Manager of the Mine, the Mine is now in better shape than at any time in its previous history, judging from the ore reserves already referred to, and which Mr. Gordon estimates can be extracted with an expenditure of \$500,000, if gone about in the way he approves and advises.

Being most largely concerned with and looking at the future of the Mine, Mr. Gordon has interested and secured the co-operation of the McKinley-Darragh Mine to join him in the project now under consideration of pumping out the water and drying the lake in the hope of allowing them to take out this large body of ore with greater safety to the employees engaged in the work of mining and making the Mine a profitable speculation to the shareholders concerned.

## COMPANIES INTERESTED *in* PROJECT of DRAINING COBALT LAKE

Before considering the expediency of draining the Lake, let us here enumerate the parties more immediately interested in it. Who are they ?

1. The Cobalt Lake Mine, represented by Mr. Gordon, the Manager, mainly and chiefly for all their field of operations are underneath the greater part of the waters of the Lake, therefore, this Mine is primarily interested.

2. The McKinley-Darragh, which has a small area underneath the southern end of the Lake, consisting of four acres.

3. The people of the Town of Cobalt, represented by the Town Council.

4. The other Mines in contiguity with or juxtaposition to the Cobalt Lake, and whose interests may in a sense more or less remote, be affected by the water of the Lake They are :

- (a). The Right-of-Way.
- (b). The Station Grounds.
- (c). The Townsite Mine.
- (d). The Silver Queen.
- (e). The Princess.
- (f). The Nipissing
- (g). The Chambers-Ferland.
- (h). La Rose.
- (i). The Northern Customs Concentrating Co.

5. The Township of Coleman, and lastly

6. The Provincial Board of Health on the part of the Government.

### *An ANALYSIS of the RESPECTIVE INTERESTS INVOLVED and the ADVANTAGES to be OBTAINED*

On examining this somewhat formidable list of interested parties, it will be soon seen that it is easily reduced. For, to take the last first, a letter was read at the Provincial Trade meeting from Dr. McCullough, Chief of the Provincial Board of Health, stating categorically that the Board would have no objection to the Lake being drained, but the Cobalt Lake Mining Company must accept the responsibility of any nuisance arising therefrom.

While Dr. Hair, speaking in the name of the Cobalt Board of Health, affirmed that the question lay entirely

outside their jurisdiction, and that it was one for the Provincial Board of Health to see to.

The two parties first mentioned on the list, the Cobalt Lake and McKinley-Darragh Mines, joined hands and were practically agreed as to the propriety of carrying out the suggested project, if allowed in their own interests, and went before the third party on the list, viz.: the Town Council, with a proposal somewhat to the following effect offering to secede from the Coleman Township and come under the jurisdiction of the Town of Cobalt, so as to give the latter complete control over the sanitary conditions.

It was represented by Mr. Gordon, that from an engineering and sanitary point of view, the project was expedient and feasible; and advantageous from a mining point of view, to state it moderately.

Mr. Gordon affirmed in the name of the two parties first mentioned, that they were willing and prepared to undertake the project at their own expense, and under the direction of the Provincial Board of Health to complete, maintain and leave everything, when the mineral was extracted, in a sanitary condition, and, further, substitute something at least as useful and ornamental to the Town as the water that now exists in the Lake. In the course of his remarks, Mr. Gordon made it clear that by adopting the proposal suggested of these Mines coming into the Town, a yearly benefit from the rates and taxes from the two Mines would be obtained of something like \$35,000.

Subject, therefore, to the detailed plan of operations for draining the Lake, the approval of the sewerage and sanitary system to be followed, and the general service to which the bottom of the Lake may be put, the four parties, viz: 1, 2, 3 and 6, are in agreement.

#### *The ONLY FORMIDABLE OPPOSITION and FROM WHENCE IT COMES*

The only one likely to object in the list under Head 4, is the Nipissing Mine, for, though it has nothing to do with the water of the Lake, in a direct sense; yet, it has large interests near it and in the Township of Coleman, from which it might not see its way clear at first to separate itself and come under the jurisdiction of the Town of Cobalt. None of the eight others mentioned in that list would enter any valid dissent to the pumping of the Lake,



seeing that it was to benefit directly the two Mines first mentioned on the list. They would at least be passive in the matter. Indeed, Mr. Bailey, Manager of the Townsite line, and a member of the Board of Trade, proposed at the outset of the meeting that the Board should approve of the draining of the Lake, and it is probable that the seven others would act similarly to the Townsite.

The only formidable opposition so far came from Item 5 on the above list, viz.: Mr. A. Ferland, representing the Township of Coleman, his argument being that the seceding of the two mines from Coleman and their incorporation in the Town of Cobalt would have such a depleting effect upon the funds of the Township exchequer that the Township Council would, on this account, "oppose strenuously" the project. With this in view, he pointedly asked the Mayor "if the Town Council would be in favor of the proposal, if the two Mines were not brought into the Town." But, inasmuch as the two Mines mentioned had volunteered of their own accord to come into the Town and to make the proposal they did, that question became totally irrelevant. The proposition was made to the Council and the Council agreed, subject to certain conditions and formalities to be afterwards stipulated by the proposing parties, the Council having accepted the proposition after having approved of the details, as laid out by Mr. Gordon, considering that they would be carried out in letter and spirit. The Township cannot stop the freedom of action of the two Mines mentioned, when they desire for economic reasons of their own, to be incorporated within the Town.

Notwithstanding that the opposition to the project at the Board of Trade meeting utterly collapsed when the facts of the case were set out and explained by Mr. Gordon, yet there are a number of citizens, who have conscientious scruples about the propriety of draining the Lake, on sanitary grounds—they are afraid that such drying up would result in a fever epidemic.

### IMPORTANT LEGAL OPINION

This view was voiced by the two lawyers present. Mr. J. W. Mahon said "he did not hesitate to say that he was at first opposed to the draining of the Lake simply because it might cause an epidemic, but, from the explanations

given at the Meeting he saw no valid reason why it should not be pumped out," and, he added, "if the Provincial Board of Health were willing to take upon itself the responsibility, and would superintend the draining of the Lake, he failed to see why there was any argument against it." This affirmation is helpful because it is intelligent, honest, unbiased and straightforward. It is, therefore, valuable and strengthens the position. However, in the course of his remarks, Mr. Mahon added this rather strong and one-sided expression, "but if one life were sacrificed, it would be of more importance to those concerned than all the Mines in the whole Camp."

### A SLIGHT SET-OFF

Now, as a set off against the last remark it may here be stated that to the writer's knowledge, certainly three human lives have been lost in this Lake, which were felt keenly by the relatives, and, if his memory does not betray him, he has the impression that more than three were lost. These catastrophes seem soon and easily forgotten. In the second place, several persons have had narrow escapes from drowning in the lake. In the third place, it is submitted that inasmuch as there are between the two Mines mentioned, about 300 men working immediately underneath the Lake, the risk is infinitely more and greater than a possible epidemic, in view of what the experts have stated at the Meeting. It might mean instant death to these miners, whereas, in the case of sickness (bad as it would undoubtedly be if it ever did come) there are friends and nurses and doctors to care for and alleviate and assuage their sufferings. An epidemic would be distressing, but the other would be terrible and simply appalling. It is, however, feasible and probable that both could be averted by adopting the requisite precautions in carrying out the project in a proper, careful and scientific manner.

And, in the fourth and last place there is a profound belief among certain parties who profess to be well informed (though I personally do not share that belief to any great extent) that the lake is used largely as a cemetery or cover for crime and which many of these parties (I can furnish the names of several) affirm will be disclosed so soon as the water is drawn off. If there be any ground for such



an assertion, I maintain it will morally as well as physically, be advantageous to dry the lake and thus make it more difficult for evil doers and easier to bring him or her or them to justice. Let the light be shed abroad so that evil may be forced to hide its head. It is roundly asserted that bodies of adults and many infants will be found.

Mr. George Mitchell spoke against the draining of the Lake mainly on sanitary grounds, and made an amendment to that effect, but he deemed it wiser at the end of the Meeting to withdraw it without putting it to a vote, so Lawyer Mahon's motion, "That this Board of Trade approve of the pumping out of Cobalt Lake, subject to the plans being submitted for the approval of the Town Council of Cobalt and the Provincial Board of Health," was unanimously agreed to.

#### CAREFUL SCRUTINY REQUISITE *in the* PUBLIC INTEREST

Nevertheless, and notwithstanding the motion which was thus passed, it is well to examine the case carefully and dispassionately in order to carry the general public along and in favor of such an undertaking. The Cause cannot suffer through a well thought-out discussion of the several aspects of the project, and it is prudent to satisfy and convince the people generally of the expediency of the enterprise on both Sanitary and Utilitarian grounds. The drying of such a Lake is a large and comparatively rare work—a more intricate and complex piece of work than would at first be apparent—that at an extempore meeting such as that which was got up by the Board of Trade, many phases or points of the question could not be handled adequately in an off-hand or desultory discussion.

The problem is one that peculiarly lends itself to popular sentiment, but popular sentiment may not be right. However, certain facts and statements were placed before the Meeting, which may prove useful in removing doubt and help to "clear the dust from the eyes." Let us consider :

#### I—*The* QUESTION CONNECTED *with the* SANITARY VIEW *of the* MATTER

##### PARTIES MOST CAPABLE *to* DECIDE *as to* EXPEDIENCY *of* PROJECT

The feasibility of this problem, apart from the financial expediency of the project, is one which ought to be con-

sidered and largely decided by the Medical Profession and Sanitary Engineers. It is pre-eminently in their domain. By these the public ought to be guided, or largely influenced.

In deciding this matter for the good of the people—the democracy—these professional men will act upon one of the golden rules or principles, namely, things that are common or for the good of all men or the community are more important than things peculiar to any one man or a few individuals. Herein lies the true test of human progress.

Something in this direction has been gained at the Board of Trade Meeting. Something has been obtained, for, as we have seen, the Provincial Board of Health has made an important announcement and sanctioned the carrying out of the project, and Dr. Hair, speaking for the local Board of Health, not only did not raise any objection, but also, while he said it (the draining of the lake) was entirely outside their jurisdiction, he inferentially approved of the project. for, he said: "Just as it was formerly erroneously stated that it was impossible to make Cobalt sanitary (which has been accomplished) so it might be possible to drain the Lake without danger." He further outlined that the present sewage disposal would not long be tolerated by the Provincial Board of Health, and that it was, therefore, within the bounds of possibility that if the Lake were drained, the sewage system of the whole locality would be dealt with at the same time.

Then, three or four with engineering knowledge spoke in favor of the problem, with expert experience. Thus, Mr. Bailey, Manager of the Townsite Mine, at once, without hesitation or reservation, proposed the Motion to approve of the draining of the Lake. Mr. Segsworth, of the Seneca-Superior, mentioned an instance—the Lake Angelina, Ishpeming, in Michigan,—where under somewhat similar conditions the Lake was drained without any ill effects. The writer has seen this dried area. Grass now grows on the sides and bottom thereof. And Mr. Gordon mentioned another, where he himself superintended the operation of pumping out the water of the Helen Mine, Boyer Lake, Michipicoten, during which, or afterwards, there had not been any ill effects, a fact which was corroborated by Mining Inspector T. F. Sutherland, who very clearly showed

there was very considerable risk, indeed positive danger, to the miners, who would have very little chance of getting out with their lives, if there were any "break" and the water came into the Mine, and all who knew intimately of the local conditions in the Cobalt Lake Mine, or Mines similarly situated, would realize that there was a possibility of such an accident. Rumor has it (and rumor is sometimes right) that one or two narrow escapes have actually already occurred and disaster fortunately prevented.

Looking upon the circumstances or picture, as thus presented at the Board of Trade Meeting on June 17th, and then turning to consider the other side; for, previous to the said Meeting a good many of the Town's citizens were, and still are, avowedly loud in their condemnation of the scheme of doing away with the water of the Lake. In fact, they had come to the Meeting prepared to "smash" the idea. Clearly, it was an instance of "Remember, when the Judgment's weak, Prejudice is strong."

#### ARGUMENTS of the OPPOSITION CRITICISED and WEIGHED

Let us, therefore, analyze the statements of the other side. The prominent spokesmen of the opposition were Mr. A. Ferland (of Haileybury, and Reeve of the Township of Coleman—not, mark you, a resident of Cobalt) and Mr. George Mitchell of Cobalt, recently appointed Solicitor of the Coleman Township.

Mr. Ferland's argument was decidedly weak, to use a proverb—"As thin as water," (thinner, evidently, than the water of Cobalt Lake), for he did not deal with or rest his argument upon the intrinsic merit or demerit of the project, or deal with its basic motives, but upon side issues—such as, depleting the Township Treasury, if the two Mines concerned, the Cobalt Lake and McKinley-Darragh, should transfer their allegiance from the Township to the Town of Cobalt. Mr. Ferland's remarks clearly showed that he was to put forth all the energy at his command to prevent these two Mines from adopting such improved methods of development and safety, as the times and progress and altered circumstances demanded. That is to say, that he was to try to place a bar in the path of the Management of these two Mines and not allow them the liberty of freedom of action that every progressive and intelligent Management

of a Mine should have. In fact, he wishes to keep or tie these Mines in the old rut of the Township and its methods. The thing is as ridiculous as it is absurd. By coming into the Town, these two Mines are not doing so to save money, but to make it, and they can only do this by spending more than they ever did with the Township. These Mines act upon the principle—a beautiful one—"Give and get," whereas, Mr. Ferland, apparently from his attitude, would have them act in the reverse or selfish fashion of "Keep and lose," or the miserly one of "Got and Hold." Mr. Ferland's advocacy completely failed to secure a single adherent, proving there was no dynamic force behind it. Indeed, it had the opposite effect, at the said meeting. But still, it is a trite and true saying that there is more than one way of killing a cat. So the promoters of the project must be on the lookout.

Adverting next to Lawyer Mitchell's remarks, he stated he was told by two physicians that they knew of cases where lakes had been drained and epidemics had followed, and that one of these two believed the draining of Cobalt Lake would bring on an epidemic of the same character. He also urged that the Provincial Board of Health (which had inferentially given its consent to the draining of the Lake) was not immaculate, for had not the Board been in charge at Haileybury, yet we had seen that an epidemic had recently occurred there. Notwithstanding the great cleverness before a lay audience of this special and trained method of pleading the reasoning was really not convincing. The argument or logic was entirely fallacious inasmuch as the cases were not at all parallel or analogous, and, therefore, a well known fallacy in logical reasoning took place, which I feel sure that this clever lawyer will at once perceive when his attention is directed thereto. In the first case, the names of the two physicians and the two lakes ought to have been specialized and individualized so that one could judge of their authority and the similarity of the conditions as to whether or not the circumstances were more or less identical. In the latter case, there was not a particle of similarity between the situation in Haileybury and the problem of draining the lake, now under consideration.

If the two former cases resembled the latter, much

weight should not be attached to that class of reasoning. It is altogether too volatile and intangible. A Board cannot—no Board can—prevent the occurrence of an epidemic if the laws of health are transgressed. Effect follows cause, must follow its cause; just as a surgeon cannot prevent or stop a person from cutting his own or any other person's throat. The office, the sphere, the skill of the surgeon is requisitioned and reigns when and where the deed is done, but not before. So the Board of Health formulates certain rules or regulations intended to guard the community, and if these rules or laws are disobeyed or disregarded or transgressed, certain effects are likely or sure to follow. Disease and epidemics ensue, and then the Board is requisitioned to come to the rescue, which it did in the case of Haileybury, and which it will do in any other case, until the situation is relieved and the epidemic ceases. In this case it is different. The facts are laid before the Provincial Board of Health, as authorized experts, to obtain permission under certain restrictions to drain off and remove the water of Cobalt Lake. After careful deliberation, with an intimate knowledge of the local conditions, the Board grants its permission—that is, it can see no reasonable or formidable objection to the undertaking on public health grounds, if ordinary precautions in the engineering art are taken in carrying out the operations connected therewith, and naturally and properly they (the Board) throw this entire responsibility on the proposer, the Cobalt Lake Mining Company. Therefore, Mr. Mitchell acted wisely in not putting his amendment to a vote. So convincing were the statements in favor of the project, that the member who was so rabidly opposed to it previous to the meeting, actually seconded the amendment approving of the project, if carried out on the lines suggested. The original motion was withdrawn and this amendment in the form now of a motion was unanimously carried; even Mr. Mitchell and his Seconder approved of it.

### *The EPIDEMIC THEORY: IS IT CERTAIN, PROBABLE, or EVEN POSSIBLE?*

But now, let us get a little closer to the subject, down to the bed-rock of the question at issue and away from popular prejudice. What about this epidemic? I presume

an epidemic of typhoid or enteric fever. Is it not a supposition, and an ill-founded one, at that? Is it not a myth? What ground is there for supposing that by draining off the water of the Lake there will be, or must follow, anything of the kind? Examine the facts. Up till 1903, there was nothing in this Lake to entitle the merest faddist to suggest the possibility of an epidemic arising therefrom. It then became known that the water of the Lake contained too much arsenic in solution to make it safe for domestic purposes, so the water was forbidden to be used domestically. Being thus not fit for use, and surrounded by the Mines, with the hilly and rocky character of its surroundings, some sewage could not but gravitate into the Lake, and, consequently some four years ago three or four small sewer drains were permitted, rightly or wrongly, to be emptied into the Lake, notwithstanding the law relating to this matter.

#### POLLUTION *of the* WATER and ERRORS ASSOCIATED THEREWITH

To a certain extent, therefore, the waters of the Lake are polluted. Further, it is known that the depth of the Lake is from 40 to 50 feet at the south end and double that at the north end. That there is a deposit of boulder clay or hard pan upon the bottom of the Lake, and that upon the top of this there is a mud or silt layer consisting of the soil from time to time blown upon the surface of the Lake or washed into it, varying from 12 to 15 feet thick.

In passing it may be well here to refer to a matter that seems to be seized upon by the advocates who oppose the project, as if it furthered or strengthened their position, namely, that the bulk of the sewage that has gone into the lake lies at the bottom (on the muddy layer) and that the water is not homogeneous throughout. They think and affirm that the purer (or less deleterious) water remains or floats on the surface or upper strata of the water, that is to say, the 400 or 500 gallons that enter the lake per minute at the south end floats down in the upper layer or part of the water and passes out at the south end. However natural this idea may appear to the untutored mind it indicates a want of culture, or knowledge of the ordinary elements of the laws of physics regarding the diffusion of



liquids. A little reflection and observation would certainly help to remove this erroneous idea. Common sense would indicate the probability that owing to the ingress and egress of a large amount of water plus the fact of the movement that continually almost exists in the water of this lake, the quality of the water is more or less uniform. It is not a stagnant pool. There is fresh clear water flowing into the lake and there is a different class of water flowing out of it and anyone can perceive the color of the water at the north end (where there are no discolouring elements entering the lake) is almost identical (if not quite so great) with that at the south end round which the pollution takes place. There is no reason why the ordinary law as to the diffusion of liquids should be suspended in this particular case to suit the ideas of the untutored mind or cranks. Moreover, it is creditable to try and remove error and doubt. The writer was speaking with one who acted formerly in the capacity of conductor of a ferry boat on the lake and he affirmed that in even his time (a few years ago) disagreeable odours existed all over the lake, but more manifest at some parts and seasons than at others.

The bulk of the sewage of the Town goes down by the old Ball Grounds and either before or thereabouts encounters the tailings mixed with cyanide solution, on its way to Cross Lake, and thence to Timiskaming Lake—that is, the tailings of the four mills to the west and northwest of the Town. No one has detected any bad or serious effect therefrom up to the present. It is, therefore, reasonable to suppose that the tailings from these mills have a neutralizing effect on the deleterious matter of the sewage.

Now, round the south end of Cobalt Lake there are six large Mills, and it is as reasonable to suppose that the bad elements in this small quantity that goes into the lake, will be equally well counteracted or neutralized by the tailings from these Mills. If it is submitted that there is not a shadow of danger from the sewage that has been permitted to flow into the Lake, why cannot the project be proceeded with? Moreover, it would be difficult to believe that the sewage that has gone into the Lake during these ten years could permeate some 12 or 15 feet of mud so as to make it have an injurious effect such as to originate, under the circumstances, an epidemic, if the waters were re-

moved. That would be trading upon the credulity of the public to an enormous extent, without proof.

But, one may even go a step further, and urge upon the consideration of those who uphold the epidemic theory, if the Lake were dried up, that if it be true or possible that the mud layer should prove so deleterious as they at present imagine after being drained, then it stands to reason that the present process of infection should not be continued any longer. It should be stopped; the sooner the better. The evil should not knowingly be allowed to accumulate, for the water, in the course of time, would emit with certainty, not only foul odors but an atmosphere charged with pestilential bacteria. But the writer does not believe that such is the case, and he would like to have the views of experts on this point, demonstrating the fact, before he could credit it.

### *The QUALITY of the WATER HAS MARKEDLY CHANGED*

One more consideration before leaving the sanitary aspect of drawing off the water in Cobalt Lake. The water of the Lake has undoubtedly undergone a change in the last few years. While personally the writer has never detected any disagreeable odors from the water, yet, at the same time, he has not had frequent occasion to be near enough to it, and he is prepared to allow the opinion of others to rule in this matter, both because they may be more acute in that special sense, and have more opportunity of testing the matter. He is free, therefore, to state that he has met gentlemen here in Cobalt, who are prepared to make a declaration or an affidavit that they have perceived disagreeable odors emanating from the waters of the Lake. If that really is the case, and if the accuracy of the information can be relied upon as a general or prevailing condition, the sooner some change is made, the better. Indeed, a change is called for and demanded. The condition indicated ought to receive the attention of the Health authorities. It may just be possible that the probosces of some gentry are hypersensitive, and imagination may play a part, small or great, in their sensory organisms. Be this as it may, there can be no doubt at all about the following, viz: that four or five years ago many parties were then seen boating or canoeing for pleasure or exercise on Cobalt

Lake. Now no one thinks of doing so, and I am not aware of having seen anyone out in this sense on the Lake for the past year or two.

Further, the color and the quality of the water has altogether altered in this period. Formerly the water used to be tolerably clear; now it is tainted or a yellow green, and is opaque, due largely or wholly to the powerful water hydrant of the Nipissing Mine clearing away the earth and clay from the surface of the Nipissing Hill, and, of course, utilization ranks before pleasure, or apparently before any other consideration. This seems to have gone by default or by degrees. Moreover, there is a portion of the south end of the Lake now being rapidly filled up by the slimes or tailings from the mills, which at the present rate of filling it would in any case transform the appearance of the Lake in 10 or 12 years.

#### **THE PRESENT WATER of COBALT LAKE DOES NOT CARRY OUT IDEALS of UTILITY**

Although the water is thus changed in color and character it may not necessarily be pestilential from sewage contamination. Certainly it is not pleasing nor pleasant, taking it all round, to contemplate a possible immersion therein. It is repellant, nay actually revolting to think of having a stomachful of its water inside one, if he should happen to fall therein. The quality of the water at present does not convey a pleasing sanitary impression to the public at large, so that the public now shun it except when they have to take a short cut to cross the lake in the ferry boat.

#### **A COMPARISON which WEIGHS in the BALANCE. FACTS vs. SENTIMENT and PREJUDICE**

So far as the expediency of draining the Lake is concerned on sanitary grounds, the popular prejudice as to epidemic fever arising therefrom is altogether fantastic and shadowy; a supposition or a fear on the one hand, whereas, on the other, two concrete and known instances were cited by members present where positively no bad or injurious effects attended or followed the removal of the water under identical circumstances. It is also worthy of some note or comment that sanction has been given and obtained to dry or drain Kerr Lake which is only 3 or 4 miles distant and which for practical purposes is similar or identical to Cobalt Lake. People live on the banks and heights surrounding

both lakes, and sewage has percolated into the waters of both and about equally. And yet what a difference there is in the public estimation between the two cases. In the case of Kerr Lake there does not appear to be a single voice raised against it. Whereas, in the case of Cobalt Lake, some supposed or would be leaders are bitter in their opposition, notwithstanding the unanimous vote passed at the Board of Trade meeting. From the press it appears that an attempt was made at a subsequent meeting, by members absent at the former meeting, not to pass the minute of the former meeting thereanent (an unheard of thing and ultra vires), and to re-open the question on account of some special views or reasons they may have had for not proceeding with the project, which views were, no doubt, presented at the former meeting, June 17th, as well and as fully as they could have done, and they were answered by a unanimous vote. The attempt, of course failed. Therefore, let us now turn from this to consider the remaining point, viz :

## II—*The* UTILITARIAN ASPECT *of the* PROBLEM of DRAINING COBALT LAKE

### REASON DEMANDS US *to* LOOK *at* PROBABILITIES RATHER THAN POSSIBILITIES

Like the Crown Reserve Mine, and the other Mines around Kerr Lake, so with Cobalt Lake Mine, the McKinley-Darragh and the other Mines in contiguity with Cobalt Lake, large bodies of silver ore had been revealed, and in order to get this ore extracted with economy and safety it was a question of expending money to get money, the principle and practice of all mining.

### OBJECT, METHODS, ADVANTAGES, COST *and* RESPONSIBILITY

It ought to be remembered that there are such Acts as the Employers Liability Act, Act for Compensation for Injuries and Loss of Life, etc., so that it became an urgent economic question to get out these large bodies of silver ore, which had been revealed or uncovered as completely as possible at the smallest cost and with, of course, the least possible liability or risk to life.

Speaking specifically for the Cobalt Lake Mine, Gordon said that at the smallest calculation there was at

least \$2,000,000 worth of ore at the bottom of the Lake, and he estimated that if his advice and methods were allowed to prevail, this body of ore could be extracted for \$500,000, leaving a profit of \$1,500,000. From what underlies these figures, it is not difficult to perceive the important character of the undertaking.

Mr. Gordon, on the other hand, clearly perceives the rights of the people of the Town of Cobalt and openly avows that the Town should have full control of the matter. He frankly agrees to become part of the Town and thus the Town, as well as the Mine, would reap the benefit from the proposition of drying the Lake.

In order to obtain a clear conception of the subject, the question ought to be viewed from two aspects, viz:

- (a). The Interests of The Mine.
- (b). The Interests of the Town of Cobalt.

#### (A)—THE INTERESTS OF THE MINE

The great or main interest of the Cobalt Lake Mine in making the proposition under consideration, is to get out in the easiest, most complete, most expeditious and cheapest manner, the \$2,000,000 worth of ore. Mr. Gordon explained that this could be done at an expenditure of something in the neighborhood of \$700,000, (at the most and this sum embraces all the expense of the undertaking), which would leave a net profit of \$1,300,000. The several steps of his mode of proceeding, or his proposal, were as follows:

1. Pumping the water out at the lower or north end of the Lake.
2. Building a large sustaining concrete wall across at the south end of the Lake at a convenient point, so as to form a dam to hold a supply of water sufficient for the purposes of the Mines in the locality.
3. Run a trunk sewer from the north end to the south end of the Lake right through the center, with stated apertures on the west and east sides to receive subsidiary sewer intakes containing sewage from districts where the incline is towards the Lake; a stated number of manholes; and a flume by which the main sewer could be flushed, thus making the sewage system of the town much better and more effectual than it can possibly be at present. In short, an up-to-date sanitation in the sphere of its influence.

4. Level the bed of the Lake and lay it out properly as a pleasant recreation park for the people of Cobalt, with band-stand, garden seats, flower beds, walks and athletic grounds, in which all the usual games could be played.

5. Mr. Gordon proposed to give, through his suggestions if adopted, a far better fire protecting service than at present possible in the Town. He affirmed that there were from 400 to 500 gallons a minute running into the Lake at the south end, and that that would be gathered in the dam in addition to what the Mills were pumping, so that he reckoned with one of their 3,000 gallon (per minute) pumps, it would be sufficient to give all the fire protection that was necessary, instead of the small fire engine that was at present used by the Town. Surely a matter of inestimable and incalculable advantage to Cobalt. Cobalt needs this. The Council would thus be free to use the present portable engine to attach to any of the hydrants of the Town.

To carry out the various items suggested would entail an expenditure of something like \$80,000 to \$100,000, but his first consideration was the safety of his employees. There was undoubtedly more risk and danger to the Miners than there was of any bad effect in draining the Lake, either during the operation, or afterwards.

On the part of the Cobalt Lake Mining Company, Mr. Gordon was quite prepared to assume the responsibility of safeguarding the health of the people against an epidemic to any extent that was required by the Provincial Board of Health, and he would only be too happy and pleased if that Body would superintend the operation.

The only terrible menace in extracting the ore was, less a "break" might occur (and it was quite possible in blasting), which might cause a great loss of life and prove disastrous to the Mine. His natural desire was to avoid all this. He advised his Board, and his Board recognizing the danger, cordially stood at his back. This then was the burden of the case as viewed in behalf of the interests of the Mine and baldly stated.

#### A COMPARISON INSTITUTED: *the TOWNSITE MINE*

Just recently (August 7) the Townsite Mine, persevering arduously and intently following the ore body, apparently without regard for any other consideration but that only



of extracting the silver ore which has proved so rich in this locality in the past couple of years, came very near breaking the crust or surface altogether and at a dangerous point, when it was suddenly discovered that they came to within 18 inches of bursting into the public road—nothing remained but the earthy crust.

Clearly, if this pursuit in extracting ore were to take place under the water of Cobalt Lake where the temptation to extract and follow the ore body (whither it may lead) would be quite as great and the freedom greater as it would not be subject to the public gaze, it is easy to perceive that a disaster might occur in a moment when least expected! Lives would undoubtedly be endangered and probably sacrificed, apart altogether from the destruction to the mine, as was the case in the King George Mine, Trout Lake, South Lorrain, two years ago. The silver Islet is a matter of history. This is a powerful and cogent argument, it is submitted, in favor of allowing the Cobalt Lake Mine to draw off the water of the Lake in their own interests. It would be unfair and unjust to stop them.

In the above case it happened on a main, indeed the only, thoroughfare leading out of Town to West Cobalt and near a point at which the citizens were already for a couple of years or more put to very considerable inconvenience by the aforesaid mine, in consequence of the elevated trolleyway for hauling the ore to the mill, having been allowed to be constructed in the first instance too low, and thus encroaching on the rights and privileges of the public highway which had to be inconveniently deepened (making a water or mud pit of a few feet deep for women, children, and men to pass through as well as vehicles). This is only a type of many liberties or infringements of the mining industry upon the rights of the citizens of the Town that might be mentioned. However, in the present case, when the danger was discovered and imminent the traffic was instantly stopped and the highway diverted. Luckily no mishap occurred. The people of Cobalt, nor even their Guardians (the Town Council), nor the Press, have uttered a single "cheep" or word of complaint. No suggestion of bad or careless or wanton surveying has been so much as whispered in this case. There is docility or patience for you—everything slides on as if by default! We

have a Mine Managers Association (game enough to defy the Divine as well as the human laws for the consideration of a few cents), we have the Miners' Union (also game enough to "strike" if only they could cripple or even hurt the capitalists while they more than half kill themselves in the effort—strikes, like fires, entail a serious and usually a useless loss), but where is the CIVIC UNION—is it asleep in the emptied or moribund Churches? It does not exist. Its voice is not heard in Cobalt, except in the revelry song, "Cobalt, the best old town we know," or in the "Blind Pigs," where a great many things are settled, besides the 2 per cent beer which the poor citizens are condemned to use, while their so-called superiors can drink anything else up to the "hard."

We have now lastly to consider :

#### *(B)—The INTERESTS of the TOWN of COBALT*

##### *DETAILED VIEW of the OPPONENTS to the MEASURE*

First, let us consider the views of the opponents to the project.

The parties loudest in their cry (zeal without knowledge, it is to be feared) to preserve the Lake in its present form, urge this preservation on the three following grounds, as far as I have heard, viz :

1. The idea that draining it would originate an epidemic of fever thereby,—a slavish or mystic fear.
2. The Lake is the one beautiful thing gifted to us by Nature, and as such it should be preserved.
3. That to remove the water of this Lake would in some mysterious way depreciate the marketable value of property, which we may designate the objection of the real estate men.

##### *STUBBORNESS IS NO ARGUMENT and IS UNWORTHY of a GREAT PROJECT*

(1). With the first of these I will not waste time, for if those who espouse this view believe they know better than those who may be termed experts in the work, and are not moved by what has already been said, then it is useless to try to, show them the error of their ways. "They are a law unto themselves." They will not—"Convince a man against his will, etc."

VALUE of NATURE'S GIFT NOT DETERIORATED by the SUBSTITUTION of GIFT of MAN'S INGENUITY—ONE of the CHOICEST GIFTS BESTOWED on the HUMAN RACE.

WHAT ARE the IDEALS?

(2). The Lake is a gift of Nature undoubtedly, but in this case Nature Herself has set a ban upon Her gift in great part, and so prohibited us from using the water inasmuch as a chemical solution bade defiance to its use by man, except at the peril of his life. The water contained arsenic, which has the property of accumulating in the body and acts as a poison. Plus this prohibition by Nature, man himself has suffered the water of the Lake to be polluted with effete or sewage matter. So that Nature and man have joined hands or combined, as it were, and deprived us of the ordinary use of the water of the Lake. Fish even cannot live or thrive in it, except possibly suckers! The only uses to which the water in this lake can or may be put as distinct from the dam which it is proposed to erect for supplying water to the mines are, (a) As a 'sight,' of water for the people. There is some force in this view—there is a certain advantage or charm in a phenomenon of this kind. It will be admitted by most people that the view or sight of water to be obtained from a beautiful lake or river or arm of the restless sea is unspeakably precious, calmativè, inspiring, and restful usually to those who live near and especially when those waters are pure, refreshing, usable, and sustaining. But, oh! such water as there is in this lake cannot be classed in the same category as that to which I have referred. It is so changed from ordinary water that it cannot even throw a reflection or shadow and only under exceptional circumstances now can it cast an image—mirage is much less frequent than it used to be. Its pollution mars it and immensely detracts from the merits it would otherwise have had for those who love and admire a water scene. Imagination and sentiment play an important part in looking at this question in both directions, in pro and in contra. Moreover, this north country (as a whole and especially around Cobalt and within a mile or two) is plentifully supplied with lakes in which there is an abundance of pure and refreshing water, suitable for man, animals, and fish, and which can satisfy the desires of the town's people who weary to feast

their eyes on the "sight" of water. Indeed, with Coleridge, one may say: "Water, water, everywhere," but,

#### A QUESTIONABLE ADVANTAGE

(b). It serves the purpose of a ferry or medium of transport to a small percentage of the people, transients who require to cross the lake for one purpose or another. Its use as a ferry is a necessity, but is that an advantage over the other or the substitute that is to be? For one that crosses the lake now in this respect, there would be one hundred that would cross it if they could do so on dry land and under favorable and pleasing surroundings. Besides, there could be a viaduct erected at small cost. Such, I regret, is all that can be said for it in its present state, and verily it is not much! As its present "beauty" is marred by the knowledge that its water is impure and polluted, why not try to benefit the town by a change?

#### A MERE ASSUMPTION

(3.) A . . . suppose if the Lake were drained it will depreciate the value of property in the Town, which at the best can only be a supposition of a few, probably mistaken but well-meaning persons. In any case this is a doubtful and debatable point at present. If the Lake is drained, we will get rid (mentally as well as physically) of something that is an eye-sore (for it is that in a certain sense) through the removal of an ugly mass of polluted water, which, avowedly by its own advocates, contains sewage matter sufficient to deter them from even probing it to the bottom, lest it might slay them by originating disease.

Second, let us now proceed to look at the aspect of those who are friendly to the measure.

#### *The* PRESENT CONDITION *a* POSITIVE HINDRANCE *to* INTER-COMMUNICATION *and* SOCIAL PROGRESS

This disagreeable body of water serves chiefly as a bar between the residents of the two sides of the Lake, the west and the east, impeding their intercourse and social life. But if this deterrent impediment were removed, there would be greater freedom of intercourse among the inhabitants resident on either side. The land on the western slope of the Nipissing Hill could be advantageously used for residential purposes, more appreciated surely than the suggested residential site a mile away at Sasaginaga Lake. And as this might bring a large revenue into the coffers of the

Nipissing Mine (something which it is whispered this mine especially worships) without injuring the mining underneath, it might open the way by which they too might be induced to make some arrangement so as to come voluntarily under the jurisdiction of the Town of Cobalt, if the Township Council should not "oppose strenuously" such a proposal. They would require police protection, water, sewerage and urban privileges—invaluable blessings—requisites for comfort, health and life. Possibly nothing but the rasping tongue of a David Lloyd George could make an impression on such Corporations, Ferlands, etc. We need him or one like him here.

**A NATURAL or BARBARIC CONDITION OUGHT TO BE SUPERSEDED *by an ETHICAL or CULTURED STATE***

As has been said, if the polluted water were removed, and if it were substituted by something far more ornamental and useful in the way indicated, instead of depreciating the value of property in the Town, it would have precisely the opposite effect, of making the town more attractive, and, above all, it would be health-giving. All, therefore, depends on the excellence of the substitute for the present mass of putrid water. If the Cobalt Lake Mine undertakes this substitution, this argument falls to the ground.

***The BED of the LAKE (if the IMPROVEMENTS INDICATED WILL BE CARRIED into EFFECT) COULD MEET the REQUIREMENTS of COBALT as NOTHING ELSE COULD or CAN***

Moreover, the Town needs such a recreation and exercise place as the bed of this Lake could be made to satisfy, for there are no walks around Cobalt, or leading out of it, only a ride on the Electric Car, which is not satisfying or beneficial, in the sense that the other is, or would be. It is well placed and in the centre of the town and approachable. The idea of preserving the Lake in its present form and the reasons given, are merely so many phantoms or bogies and scarcely worth pursuing further.

**COBALT HAS SUFFERED *and IS SUFFERING from the EVIL of* DISCRIMINATION: LET US NOT PURSUE *the EVIL* COURSE, *but STOP IT***

Allusion has already been made to the revenue that would accrue to the Town from incorporating these two Mines, the Cobalt Lake and the McKinley-Darragh, into it of about \$35,000 a year. In referring to Cobalt Lake Mine

alone, Mr. Gordon said on the estimated figures there would be a considerable annual revenue derived. Had this revenue come at an earlier date, how different would Cobalt have been to-day ! But, better late than never, and when it is got and put to good account, Cobalt may yet be restored and made to flourish.

In conclusion, if those Mines around Kerr Lake have been permitted without demur to drain away the water (not a single voice of the miners resident near the Lake has been heard against it, and miners are not usually slow to let their complaints or grievances be heard) in order to extract the ore more completely and with the requisite safety for the employees engaged in the work, is there any good reason why the same should not be ceded to the Cobalt Lake Mine and McKinley-Darragh Mine ? It is hereby submitted that the cases are similar and almost identical. No obstacle should be put in the way of the latter, just because they propose to benefit the Town of Cobalt, and facilitate their own operations. On the contrary, all the more reason should the people of the Town of Cobalt, acclaim, "Good Luck to Them !"

Finally, at the subsequent meeting of the Board of Trade, July 4th, it was stoutly affirmed by those opposing the project, that "this was the most important item of business that had ever come before that body." If true (there is no desire to controvert that assertion), the writer has endeavored in the foregoing to place all the facts and arguments as fairly and honestly as he can before the reader, and the Citizens of the Town. Is it too much to say that by allowing the management of these Mines to carry out the project, there is ground for hoping that by or in consequence of this ingenious work (if accomplished), the day-star or the dawn of our long-looked for prosperity is about to arise. Hope long deferred makes the heart sick, many have left us, is this "most important item of business" a sign of brighter, happier, and more prosperous times, to those who have stuck to Cobalt—"Cobalt, the best old town we know !" Or, is it the reverse—must we submit to be censured for honestly daring to do our best and duty?

"Censure is the tax a man pays to the public for being eminent."—Spectator.

"To be, or not to be; is the question."—Shakespeare.

AE. MUNRO, M.D.



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